Verbal-visual evaluation in disaster reporting: Attitudinal analyses of hard news in *The Jakarta Post*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Disaster news helps the public understand crisis events and is often presented as factual and objective because it is classified as hard news. However, disaster reports still contain evaluative elements that shape how events and social actors are perceived. These evaluations are expressed through both language and news photographs. This study examines how such evaluations are constructed in disaster reports from *The Jakarta Post* through the interaction between written texts and accompanying news photographs. The study draws on Appraisal Theory, as proposed by White and Martin within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics. It analyses attitude resources in hard news reporting, realised through verbal and visual modes, and their intersemiotic relations. The data consist of eleven hard news articles, purposively selected 2024 that meet specific inclusion criteria. Both verbal and visual elements were analysed qualitatively, supported by simple frequency counts to identify dominant patterns. The findings show 185 attitude instances distributed across three types. Negative appreciation is the most common (47%), followed by negative affect (24%). These are mainly used to show physical damage, loss, and human suffering. In contrast, positive judgment makes up 29% of the data and is used to present institutions, such as government agencies and rescue teams, as responsible and effective. News photographs support these meanings by showing destruction, danger, and humanitarian action. Across text and images, repetition and extension strengthen evaluative meanings and create a consistent viewpoint. The study shows that disaster reporting is evaluative and multimodal. Therefore, it highlights the need for critical multimodal literacy to understand how meaning is constructed through language and images.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, Indonesia experiences various types of natural disasters. These events receive wide coverage in national and international media. As a major English newspaper, *The Jakarta Post* plays a significant role in reporting such events to both local and global readers. In journalism, such disaster events are presented as hard news. Hard news is widely known as an objective journalistic text that presents information without including the personal opinions of journalists (see Keeble, 2006; Reeves & Keeble, 2015). Its primary purpose is to inform the public by reporting events clearly and impartially. Hard news generally focuses on reporting timely and socially significant events (Bell, 1991; Huan, 2017).

However, recent studies show that hard news is not free from evaluation. Research in discourse analysis suggests that hard news involves evaluation (e.g. Huan, 2017; Ngai, 2022; White, 2012, 2020, 2025). Although journalists intend to be impartial when reporting such issues, the language they use may have subtle forms of alignment or disagreement with certain viewpoints (Ngai, 2022). They express evaluation through quoted voices, such as statements from government officials or eyewitnesses (Martin & White, 2005; Nádraská, 2022; Stenvall, 2014; White, 2012). In so doing, they can introduce evaluation of damage or responsibility without stating their own views directly. Another strategy is graduation, which refers to language that strengthens or weakens the strength of a statement (Hood, 2010; Wan, 2024). This strategy includes the use of intensifying words (Cottle, 2012).

Evaluation can also be expressed through images. The way images are selected and presented invites judgments and emotional responses from readers (Caple, 2013; Economou, 2009, 2012). Images of damaged buildings, injured people, or rescue workers go beyond presenting information. They shape how audiences understand and respond to the event. Previous studies have proven that such images can evoke viewers to feel sympathy for victims, concern about the situation, or criticism of the response (Borah, 2009; Caple, 2013).

Evaluation in news reporting can be systematically analysed through Appraisal Theory (Hood, 2019; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2015). This theory is a part of the broader framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). It explains how language is used to express evaluation. This framework enables speakers and writers to convey attitudes, make judgements, and align themselves with particular perspectives. Although the theory was first developed to analyse verbal language, the

analytical tools have also been applied to multimodal texts such as news reports (Economou, 2009, 2012).

Studies on attitudinal evaluation in disaster news reporting have employed Appraisal Theory to reveal how evaluation is embedded in language. Liu and Stevenson (2013) compared Chinese and Australian disaster reports, finding that Chinese media used more emotion and judgment, while Australian outlets relied more on appreciation. Meanwhile, Puspita and Pranoto (2021) examined Japanese disaster coverage; in their analysis, journalists tended to use neutral evaluations through appreciation and implicit judgment to maintain objectivity. More recently, Namira et al. (2024) analysed Indonesian newspapers and found that judgement and appreciation were the dominant resources for evaluating institutional responses and disaster impacts, although their study did not focus on English-language media. In terms of visual discourse, Fawzy (2019) analysed Pulitzer-winning photographs of the refugee crisis, demonstrating that affect and appreciation were conveyed visually to evoke empathy and guide viewers' interpretations.

Although several studies have contributed to this field, few have examined how evaluation is constructed through the interaction of verbal and visual attitude resources. Most previous studies have focused on verbal or visual elements separately. This study addresses this gap by analysing evaluative stance across both verbal and visual resources in disaster news published by *The Jakarta Post*. Specifically, the study focuses on attitude resources and their interaction across modes, known as intersemiotic relations (Caple, 2013), to explain how meaning is jointly created in disaster reporting. As an English-language newspaper with a local and international readership, *The Jakarta Post* plays an important role in shaping global views of disasters in Indonesia. *The Jakarta Post* adopts an evaluative stance in its hard news coverage of disasters. The present study is guided by the following questions:

1. How are verbal attitude resources used in disaster news reports in *The Jakarta Post?*
2. How are visual attitude resources realised in accompanying news images?
3. How do verbal and visual attitude resources interact to construct evaluative stance?

This study is important for three main reasons. First, it fills a gap in Appraisal research by exploring how verbal and visual expressions of attitude work together in hard news reporting of disasters. Although hard news is seen as objective, it contains subtle evaluations that influence how readers interpret such events. Second, the study reveals how The Jakarta Post uses

language and images to guide readers' understanding. This helps readers better understand how the media represent disaster events. Third, the study advances journalism studies and provides practical insights for improving news reporting and media literacy programmes.

LITERATURE REVIEWS
Evaluation in News Discourse

Evaluation generally refers to the expression of writers' or speakers' opinions toward people, events, or things (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Hunston & Thompson, 2000). It allows speakers and writers to position themselves and their audiences interpersonally through language and other semiotic choices (see Conrad & Biber, 2000; Economou, 2006). In addition to expressing opinions, evaluation helps to build social relations between speakers and readers, as well as construct perspectives (Liu & McCabe, 2018). Evaluative meaning can be expressed directly through clear statements of opinion or indirectly through language that appears neutral or factual (Martin & White, 2005). This suggests that texts that maintain objectivity may contain forms of evaluation.

In the literature, evaluation is discussed using different terms. These include evaluation (Bednarek, 2006; Hunston & Thompson, 2000), appraisal (Martin & White, 2005), metadiscourse (Hyland & Tse, 2004) and stance (Biber & Finegan, 1989; Englebretson, 2007; Haarman & Lombardo, 2009). While these approaches stem from different linguistic traditions, they all examine how language expresses attitudes or value positions. This study uses Appraisal Theory with a focus on attitude resources. This framework is chosen because it allows detailed analysis of both explicit and implicit evaluation and helps connect language patterns to news framing (White, 2012). Bednarek (2006) notes that evaluation in media discourse plays an important role in constructing news values. For this reason, analysing evaluation using Appraisal Theory in *The Jakarta Post* is relevant because disaster reporting in Indonesia appears in hard news, which foregrounds implicit evaluation.

Attitude in Appraisal Theory

One of the significant frameworks for analysing evaluative language is Appraisal Theory (Hood, 2019; Martin & White, 2005; Ngo & Unsworth, 2015; White, 2006, 2015) developed in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL) tradition. It divides evaluation into three areas. Attitude expresses feelings and values. Engagement manages sources of voices. Graduation adjusts the strength of meaning. Studies show that Appraisal Theory can explain how writers or speakers express their feelings and take a stance in various communicative settings, such as daily conversation (Eggins

& Slade, 2005), academic context (Hood, 2010; Mori, 2017), and media setting (Nurjanah, 2021; Sun et al., 2025; Wan, 2024). Therefore, this study focuses on attitude as it is central to understanding evaluation in hard texts.

Attitude, as one of the Appraisal subsystems, consists of three semantic regions that traditionally express emotion, ethics, and aesthetics. Those areas are termed affect, judgement, and appreciation. Affect refers to positive and negative feelings or emotions triggered by text, behaviour, and events. Judgement evaluates people and their behaviours in positive or negative terms. Appreciation is concerned with the positive and negative evaluation of things and natural phenomena with reference to aesthetic values (White, 2011).

Each attitude type is further divided into subcategories (see Hood, 2019; Martin & Rose, 2007; White, 2015). Affect includes un/happiness (feelings of joy and sadness), dis/satisfaction (feelings of frustration and fulfilment), in/security (feelings of calm and anxiety), and dis/inclination (feelings of desire or lack of interest). Judgement is mainly divided into social esteem and social sanctions. Social esteem evaluates normality, capacity, and tenacity. Meanwhile, social sanction evaluates veracity and propriety. Appreciation includes reaction (impact and quality), composition (balance and complexity), and value (importance).

Attitudinal values can be realised directly or indirectly. Direct expression uses explicit attitudinal words called attitudinal lexis. Indirect expression relies on implied meanings through choices in content. Martin and White (2005) further describe three ways to express indirect values, namely, provoke, flag, and afford. Provoke uses a metaphor to suggest evaluation. The flag uses graduation to show the writer's stance (Hood, 2010). Affordance is achieved through the choice of experiential meanings that carry cultural expectations. These indirect realisations are referred to as tokens and are symbolised by [t]. It has been recognised that evaluative language in news can be realised through both direct and indirect forms (Nádraská, 2022; Ngai, 2022; Stenvall, 2014). Therefore, this study follows this framework and codes the data.

Multimodality and The Grammar of Visual Design

Multimodality refers to the use of more than one semiotic mode, such as visual, spatial, and linguistic, to create meaning (Kress, 2010). In multimodal texts, meaning is created through the interaction of these modes rather than by a single mode. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) offers a framework for examining how these modes interact to construct meaning in texts. It focuses on how meaning is distributed across semiotic modes (Bednarek & Martin, 2010; Jewitt et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2015). In particular, it explores how these modes support or extend one another in the construction of

meaning (Painter et al., 2012). This approach allows researchers to analyse how language and images work together to construct evaluation (Aynalem & Zerai, 2025; Bateman & Tseng, 2023; Caple & Knox, 2019).

The grammar of visual design, which is developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) provides a framework for analysing images. This framework is based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and applies three metafunctions, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, to images. It explains how resources such as layout, gaze, angle, and colour communicate meaning (Ledin & Machin, 2020). These elements are used strategically in different contexts, such as the media (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Caple, 2013; Caple & Knox, 2017), political context (Machin & van Leeuwen, 2016), and educational settings (Chen, 2021; Knox et al., 2010; Liu & Qu, 2014) to construct meaning or evaluation.

This present study examines three dimensions of visual meaning, which are representational or ideational, interactional or interpersonal, and compositional, to investigate meanings in news photos. The ideational function refers to how events, participants, and settings are represented in photos (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021; Painter et al., 2012). In news photos, the ideational function appears through visual depictions of events, such as activities, the presence of people, and the context shown in images (see Caple, 2013). This study draws on these prior frameworks to analyse how such visual elements help viewers recognise what is happening and who is involved, ultimately forming the experiential meaning of the image (see Aisyiyah, 2023; Rafelina & Hermawan, 2022).

The interpersonal function examines the relationship between viewers and the represented participants in images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). This relationship is realised via features such as gaze, social distance, and camera angle. A direct gaze invites viewers to interact, while an indirect gaze encourages them to observe the information given in the images. Social distance is expressed through shot size. Close-up shots suggest intimacy, while long shots suggest distance. Camera angle also symbolises power relations. An eye-level angle shows equality with the portrayed participants, a high angle positions viewers as dominant, and a low angle positions viewers as subordinate. These interpersonal features influence how viewers respond to images (Machin & Mayr, 2023). Previous studies show that such features contribute to evaluative meaning, particularly in crisis reporting (e.g., Fawzy, 2019, 2025) and in news photos (e.g., Knox, 2009).

The compositional function focuses on how meaning is organised in an image. This function covers three aspects, which include information value, salience, and framing (see Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). Information value refers to the placement of elements in images. In this regard, elements on the left represent given information while those on the right present new

information. Salience refers to features such as size, colour, focus, or contrast that draw the viewers' attention to a particular element. Framing relates to how visual elements are connected or separated. It suggests whether elements are seen as a whole or as separate parts. These compositional resources shape how viewers navigate and interpret an image (e.g., Caple, 2022).

Text-image Relation in News Discourse

Meaning-making in contemporary media depends on the interplay of texts and images. This multimodal interaction is known as intersemiosis (Liu & Halloran, 2009) or intersemiotic complementarity (Royce, 2007). It describes how different semiotic modes work together to construct meaning. For this reason, the relationship between texts and images becomes important. In hard news, reporting should be neutral and factual. However, accompanying images evoke emotional responses or express values that strengthen evaluative meaning in the text. Such multimodal interplay shapes audience perception (Bednarek & Caple, 2017; Caple, 2022; Parry, 2010). Thus, analysing both verbal and visual resources is essential for understanding how news discourses construct meaning (e.g., Cheema et al., 2023).

Caple (2013) identifies three types of text-image relations. Those are intersemiotic repetition, expansion, and deviation. In intersemiotic repetition, text and image communicate the same meaning and reinforce the same information. In expansion, the image or text adds meaning that is not present in the other. In deviation, the meanings in the text and the image contradict each other, creating tension or ambiguity. These patterns explain how evaluation is constructed across modes. This study uses Caple's (2013) intersemiotic framework to explore how *The Jakarta Post* presents an attitudinal stance in its hard news disaster coverage by analysing how verbal and visual elements interact to influence readers.

METHOD
Research Design

This study used a qualitative discourse analysis based on discourse semantics, particularly Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005). A qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring how evaluative meanings are constructed in news discourse. It allows for close analysis of language and images in their socio-cultural and communicative contexts (see Bednarek & Caple, 2012, 2017). Although the study was mainly qualitative, it also included simple quantification. Frequencies and percentages were used to identify recurring patterns in the data. In this study, basic numerical indicators help to improve transparency and support interpretations in qualitative research (see Bryman & Bell, 2019, p. 332).

To analyse how evaluation is expressed through language and images, the study adopted a Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) framework (Bowcher, 2012; Ledin & Machin, 2020). MDA explores how different modes are combined to express evaluation (Economou, 2012; Martin & White, 2005). This framework is suitable for hard news reporting where photographs accompany texts and shape audience perceptions of events. By integrating Appraisal Theory and MDA, the research design provides a detailed analysis of how the visual and verbal resources work together to produce evaluative meanings.

Data Collection

The data for the present study comprised 11 hard news reports from *The Jakarta Post* that reported natural disasters in Indonesia during 2024. Hard news was chosen because it provides factual and timely reporting that reflects how the media frames disasters when they occur. *The Jakarta Post* was selected because it is a leading English-language newspaper known for its credibility and consistent coverage of national events, including disasters. In collecting the data, this study used the purposive sampling technique (see Creswell, 2009, p. 178). The data selection followed several criteria. First, the articles had to be published between 1 January and 31 December 2024. Second, they had to report on natural disasters in Indonesia, such as floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and landslides. Third, only hard news articles were selected, while editorials, opinion pieces, features, and in-depth reports were excluded. Very short reports (less than 200 words) and reports about non-natural or non-Indonesian disasters were also omitted. The articles were collected using keyword searches on *The Jakarta Post*'s website. Each article was manually checked to ensure it met the criteria and then compiled into a dataset for qualitative analysis. Table 1 presents the list of articles used in this study.

The small dataset is intentional and suitable for qualitative, discourse-oriented research, which prioritises depth over size (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, qualitative studies using multimodal discourse analysis typically work with focused datasets because analysis of language and images is detailed and interpretive (Jewitt et al., 2025; Ledin & Machin, 2020). A limited number of carefully chosen texts is therefore sufficient to capture the evaluative patterns examined in this study (Tracy, 2020).

Table 1. Hard news used in the study

Date	Titles	Word Counts
4 March 2024	Flooding in South, East, West Jakarta affects over 1,200 people	274
2 May 2024	Death toll rises to 34 in West Sumatra floods 1	485

Date	Titles	Word Counts
9 July 2024	Death toll from Gorontalo landslide rises to 23	233
9 July 2024	Landslides kill 10 in Sulawesi, 40 missing	302
18 September 2024	Damage, injuries, Whoosh trips cancelled after magnitude-5 quake hits West Java	544
20 September 2024	Two die, hundreds injured in 5-magnitude West Java quake	317
4 November 2024	Death toll from Mount Lewotobi volcano eruption rises to 10	323
4 November 2024	Six dead in Flores after volcano erupts	381
24 November 2024	North Sumatra digs out as flooding, landslide death toll hits 20	354
28 November 2024	North Sumatra landslide death toll climbs to 27	226
16 December 2024	Flood in Trenggalek cuts national road access	313

Data Analysis

The data analysis focused on three aspects, including verbal, visual, and intersemiotic analysis. Each aspect was examined carefully to reveal how evaluative meanings are constructed through language, image, and their interaction. Manual analysis was used because the dataset was relatively small and required close contextual interpretation. Thus, in the present study, no specialised coding software was used.

The verbal analysis was conducted in five stages. These stages include initial reading, text segmentation, attitude coding, quantification, and interpretation. First, read all verbal texts carefully to obtain an overall understanding of the evaluative stance expressed in the news coverage. Then, divide the texts into smaller units, mainly sentences, to make it easier to identify evaluative expressions. Apply the Appraisal framework by Martin and White (2005) to identify attitude types which focus on affect, judgement, and appreciation. Manually code each instance to maintain accurate context. Then, count how often each attitude type appears to observe the dominant evaluative patterns. Finally, interpret the patterns in connection with how *The Jakarta Post* uses language to represent disasters and the people involved. Examples of verbal coding and analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. An example of the analytical matrix to examine Attitude in texts

Text	Appraised	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
At least 10 people <u>died</u> after Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki in East Nusa Tenggara erupted near midnight on Sunda, …	10 people	t, -hap	-	-

The visual analysis followed four main steps, including initial viewing, coding, classification, and interpretation. First, all photographs were

examined to see how disaster scenes and people were shown. Then, the images were coded based on compositional and interactive elements using multimodal discourse analysis (Ledin & Machin, 2018). Next, the coded elements were grouped according to their evaluative meaning, such as positive or negative feelings, judgements, or appreciation of the setting or people. Finally, the analysis interpreted how these visuals helped build evaluative meanings and whether they supported or differed from the verbal texts. An example of visual coding and analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. An example of the analytical matrix to examine Attitude in images accompanying texts

Images	Ideational meaning	Interpersonal meaning	Compositional meaning	Attitude
Residents clear rubble from their home in Cianjur regency, West Java, on April 28, 2024 after a magnitude 6.2 earthquake struck on Nov. 21, 2018 shook a wider area of West Java regency. *(Source: The Jakarta Post)*	**The damaged buildings**	Taken from frontal angle, medium to long shot	Given salience, Placed in the central position	Evoking negative appreciation [-ve appreciation: valuation]

The intersemiotic analysis included three stages: reading and viewing, classification, and interpretation. First, the texts and their images were examined together to determine how they relate to each other. Then, these relationships were grouped into two types. Finally, the analysis examined how the text and image work together to show evaluation.

To ensure consistency, the coding scheme was reviewed twice at different stages of the analysis. Although no intercoder was involved, single-coder analysis is acceptable in qualitative and multimodal discourse studies that rely on close interpretation and contextual judgement rather than coder agreement (Rose, 2016). In such studies, reliability is supported through reflexive and repeated engagement with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2008; Tracy, 2020). The repeated review of coding decisions improved consistency and increased the transparency of the analysis.

FINDINGS

This section presents findings on the use of attitudinal resources in hard news reports on natural disasters based on the Appraisal framework. The analysis reveals the distribution of attitude categories, such as affect, judgement, and appreciation, in the data. The accompanying images are examined using multimodal discourse principles (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) to identify how visual features, such as angle and salience, contribute to attitudinal meanings. Furthermore, intersemiotic relations are analysed using Caple's framework (Caple, 2013) to identify patterns of image-text relations in the reports.

Attitude in News Reports

The analysis examines how attitudinal resources such as affect, judgment, and appreciation are used in the investigated data. These resources show how feelings, evaluations of behaviour, and assessments of things or events are expressed in the news report. Each instance is also coded as positive or negative. In total, the data contain 185 attitude instances across the three types. Table 4 presents their distribution and polarity.

Table 4. Attitude distribution in news texts

| Attitude | Polarity | | | | Total |
| | Positive | | Negative | | |
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Affect	1	2%	43	32%	44
Judgement	48	94%	4	3%	52
Appreciation	2	4%	87	65%	89
Total	**51**	**100%**	**134**	**100%**	**185**

As shown in Table 4, 51 instances convey positive polarity, while 134 instances exhibit negative polarity. Within the positive polarity, judgment has 48 occurrences and accounts for 94% of all positive attitudes. By contrast, affect occurs once (2%), and appreciation appears twice (4%). The negative polarity shows a different distribution pattern. Here, appreciation is the most frequent, with 87 instances, and represents 65% of all negative attitudes. Affect has 43 instances (32%). This is followed by judgment, which appears four times and makes up 3% of the total negative attitudes. These results show clear differences in the distribution of attitude types across the two polarity groups. Table 5 further details the distribution of each attitude subcategory across the dataset and shows their relative frequencies in the analysed news reports.

Table 5. Attitude subcategories distribution in news texts

| Attitude | Positive | | Negative | |
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Affect				
Security	1	2%	12	**9%**
Happiness	-	0%	31	**23%**
Judgement				
Capacity	7	14%	2	**1%**
Tenacity	23	45%	-	**0%**
Veracity	6	12%	-	**0%**
Propriety	12	24%	2	**1%**
Appreciation				
Reaction	-	0	28	**21%**

Attitude	Positive		Negative	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Composition	1	2%	11	8%
Valuation	1	2%	48	36%
Total	**51**	**100%**	**134**	**100%**

Table 5 presents the distribution of attitude subcategories across positive and negative polarity in the news texts. In the "affect" category, negative values occur far more often than positive ones. Negative happiness is the most frequent affect category, with 31 instances (23%), followed by negative security with 12 instances (9%). Positive affect appears only once, in the security category (2%). In contrast, the "judgement" shows a different pattern, with positive values occurring more frequently than negative ones. Positive tenacity records the highest number of instances (45%), followed by positive propriety (24%). Positive capacity and veracity each appear six times, or 12%. In the appreciation category, negative values are dominant in all subcategories. Negative valuation is the highest frequency with 48 instances (36%). This is followed by a negative reaction (20%) and a negative composition (8%). Overall, the data show that negative polarity is most common in the Affect and Appreciation category, while positive polarity is more frequent in Judgement subcategories. Table 6 presents the distribution of attitude types across the different disaster topics.

Table 6. Attitude distribution across disaster topics

Topics	Affect		Judgement		Appreciation		Total
	-	+	-	+	-	+	
Earthquake	9			11	18	2	40
Vocanic Eruption	7			11	16		34
Flood	10	1		10	29		50
Landslide	17		4	16	24		61

Across disaster topics, a clear pattern appears in the use of attitudinal meanings. Reports on landslides contain the most attitudinal items (61), followed by floods (50), earthquakes (40), and volcanic eruptions (34). This pattern suggests that landslide news uses more evaluative language to describe events, people, and impacts. Across attitude types, negative affect appears most often in landslide reports, followed by flood, earthquake, and volcanic eruption news. Positive affect is very limited and occurs only in flood reports. In terms of judgment, negative judgment is most common in earthquake and volcanic eruption reports. Positive judgment appears mainly in flood and landslide news and often evaluates institutional responses. In terms of appreciation, negative appreciation is the most frequent category across all disaster topics. It is most common in landslide and flood reports,

followed by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Positive appreciation is rare and appears only in earthquake reports. Overall, these findings show that landslide and flood reports contain richer, more frequent evaluative language than those for the other disaster types.

The following excerpt illustrates how negative appreciation is realised through the valuation subcategory to show seriousness and urgency in the news reports.

Excerpt 1. Negative appreciation values

[1a]   A magnitude-5 earthquake that occurred in West Java on Wednesday morning has injured <u>at least 20 people</u> [t, -val] and damaged <u>a number of houses and public facilities</u> [t, -val] in Bandung and Garut.

[1b]   Images shared by authorities showed <u>the evening sky over the volcano turned red due to the eruption</u> [t, -react].

In Excerpt 1a, the appraised entity is the earthquake, while the appraiser is the journalist. The earthquake is evaluated negatively under the valuation subcategory [-val]. The evaluation is not expressed through adjectives but through graduation resources that function as a flagging strategy. The phrases "at least 20 people" and "a number of houses and public facilities" indicate numerical uncertainty and signal the scale of human and material loss. There is no explicit affective language that appears in this segment. The evaluation relies on factual description rather than emotional words.

In Excerpt 1b, the volcanic ash is the appraised entity, and the journalist is the appraiser. The excerpt shows negative appreciation, as reflected in the reaction category [t, -react]. The phrase "the evening sky over the volcano turned red" describes an unusual environmental condition that signals danger caused by the eruption. The evaluation is not expressed directly through emotional language but through a visible change in the environment. This negative evaluation is evoked through descriptive details that guide readers' understanding of the event.

Negative affect appears 43 times and is the second-most-common attitude type. These instances refer to emotions such as grief or shock reported in the texts. In this context, such instances are realised indirectly through lexical choice, which triggers emotional meanings rather than explicit ones. The following excerpt illustrates how negative affect is expressed in reports about floods and landslides in the Indonesian context.

Excerpt 2. Negative affect values

[2a]   A 4-year-old boy identified as Fauzan and a sixth-grade elementary school student named Nasywa Syaqira <u>have died</u> [t, -hap] after a 5-magnitude earthquake jolted West Java on Wednesday morning, authorities have reported, with <u>at least 139 others suffering mild to severe injuries</u> [t, -hap].

[2b]   While residents <u>have moved their valuables to higher ground</u> [t, -sec], …

In Excerpt 2a, the appraised participants are the victims, particularly the children affected by the earthquake, while the appraiser is the journalist reporting the event. The excerpt illustrates a token of negative affect, namely, unhappiness [t, -hap]. This attitudinal meaning is connected to the loss of life and the suffering caused by the earthquake. The explicit reference to children, such as "a 4-year-old boy" and "a sixth-grade elementary school student," creates a personalised reference to the victims. The phrase "at least" serves as a gradation marker, increasing the scale and seriousness of the event. Affect remains implicit in this segment. In a similar way, the evaluation is evoked through factual descriptions.

In Excerpt 2b, the appraised participants are the disaster-affected residents, while the appraiser is the journalist. The excerpt demonstrates negative affect related to insecurity [-sec] through the description of precautionary action. The act of moving valuables to higher ground signals a response to risk and reflects fear or concern about further danger. The negative emotion is not stated directly. It is inferred from behaviour. This strategy allows the text to acknowledge human emotion while maintaining journalistic objectivity.

In contrast, judgment is mostly positive with 48 out of 52 positive instances. This pattern is that the news often praises people or institutions involved in disaster response and recovery. These positive judgements highlight effectiveness (capacity), compassion (propriety), or resilience (tenacity). Such evaluations support social values, recognise good actions, and help restore hope after a crisis. The following excerpt shows this pattern.

Excerpt 3. Positive judgement values
[3a]   Rescuers <u>were looking for missing people</u>, [t, +ten] including those trapped in a minibus and other vehicles on a hilly interprovince road hit by a mudslide, he said…
[3b]   … the central government <u>could help provide aid</u> [t, +prop] to the 10,000 affected residents.

In Excerpt 3a, the appraised participants are the rescuers, while the appraiser is Hadi Wahyudi, the North Sumatra police spokesperson. The excerpt presents a positive judgement of tenacity [+ten] highlights the rescuers' resilience and determination. Although the lexical choices are neutral, the description of ongoing search activities "were looking for missing people… including those trapped" implicitly shows them as persistent and committed in facing challenges. This evaluation is realised through a flagging strategy where the dangerous and urgent setting, such as a mudslide on a hilly road, strengthens their courage and dedication. This evaluation supports

socially valued behaviour and presents institutional action in a positive way. Excerpt 3b suggests a positive judgment by presenting the central government as morally responsible. It implies that providing aid to disaster victims is both expected and commendable. The phrase "could help" expresses this positive intention through a flagging strategy. In this way, the text presents the government as fulfilling its duty and responding to citizens' needs during a crisis.
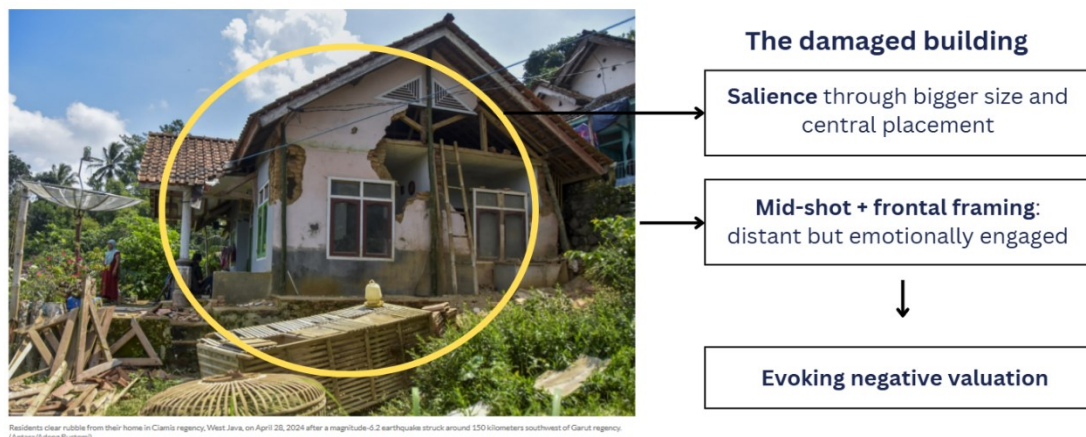
Attitude in Images

Evaluative meaning appears in both written news texts and news photos. The analysis shows that news photos play an important role in how events and people are evaluated. In the present study, the photos show negative appreciation (5 occurrences), such as scenes of damage or destruction, positive judgment (5 occurrences), which highlights the efforts of rescuers or government officials, and negative affect (one occurrence), which depicts insecure conditions. However, as noted by Economou (2009, 2012), different evaluative meanings can appear in one image at the same time. Without captions, photos invite different types of evaluation. Thus, viewers can understand these messages through the portrayed people, settings, and actions shown in the images. These findings indicate that images and texts go hand in hand to build evaluations in disaster news.

Figure 1 implies the severe impact of the natural disaster. The image evokes negative valuation appreciation [-ve appreciation: valuation]. The image highlights the loss of value and function in the affected area. The photo depicts physical destruction, such as buildings with broken roofs and collapsed walls. These visual details invite viewers to assess the extent of the damage and reinforce the event's social and material consequences. Even without texts or captions, the condition of the buildings communicates the destruction.

This evaluation is constructed through the arrangement and framing of elements in the image. The damaged building is placed at the centre and takes up most of the space. Consequently, it draws immediate attention from viewers. The simple background, which is mostly empty and blue, helps viewers focus on the destruction. This contrast directs the viewers' focus to the destruction. This depiction shows that destruction is the central theme of the visual narrative. In addition, the small human figures placed at the edges highlight the scale of the damage. This visual choice makes the buildings look dominant and emphasises the seriousness of the disaster.

The distance and angle of the photo affect how viewers evaluate the scenes. The photo is taken from a medium distance and shown from a frontal angle without direct eye contact. This perspective positions viewers as informed observers and allows a limited emotional connection (see Kress &

van Leeuwen, 2021). The absence of close-up shots further reduces emotional connection. The use of natural light and neutral colours gives the image a plain and authentic look. As a result, the photo realistically depicts the damage. This supports the objective tone of hard news. By showing the visible effects of the disaster, the image invites viewers to reflect on its impact on people and society.

Residents clear rubble from their home in Ciamis regency, West Java, on April 28, 2024 after a magnitude-5.2 earthquake struck around 150 kilometers southwest of Garut regency. (Antara/Adeng Bustomi)

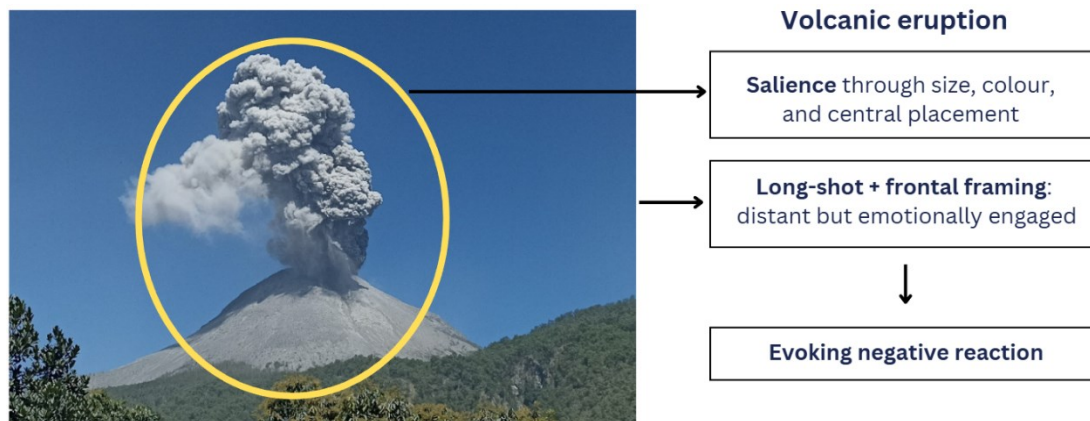Figure 1. Negative appreciation under the subcategory of valuation

Ultimately, the image functions as a visual cue that guides viewers' judgment without using words. Viewers are not directly told how to feel, but the composition of the image triggers emotional responses such as concern or sadness. This effect comes from several visual techniques. The damaged areas are carefully placed in the frame. This arrangement positions viewers as witnesses. Besides, the frontal angle further suggests that viewers are seeing the aftermath directly. However, the lack of close-ups and visible emotions maintains a sense of distance. Such visual choices present the places as damaged and empty and show the loss of their social and practical function.

The evaluation in the image reflects negative appreciation [-ve appreciation: reaction] because it appeals to viewers' emotional and visual senses. The large columns of smoke and bursts of ash dominate the photos. Such visual elements emphasise the power of volcanic activity. Their scale and intensity trigger strong visual and emotional reactions. The image immediately draws viewers' attention and establishes a dramatic atmosphere. When viewing such scenes, they may feel amazed, afraid, or vulnerable. The image portrays the seriousness of the environmental threat through the combination of visual cues.

The emotional effect of the photos is strengthened by their composition. The volcano is shown from a distance, indicating the full scale of the eruption. This presentation provides a wide perspective of the event. The erupting plume is placed at the centre and contrasts clearly with the sky,

which invites an emotional response. The absence of human figures in this image shifts the focus to the powerful force of nature. This choice highlights the magnitude of the event and reinforces human vulnerability. The framing reflects a documentary style, relying on natural elements such as smoke and ash. As a result, the image evokes emotion while maintaining a factual appearance.

Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki spews volcanic ash during an eruption as seen from Boru village in East Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, on July 14, 2024. (AFP/Arnold Welianto)

Figure 2. Negative appreciation under the subcategory of reaction
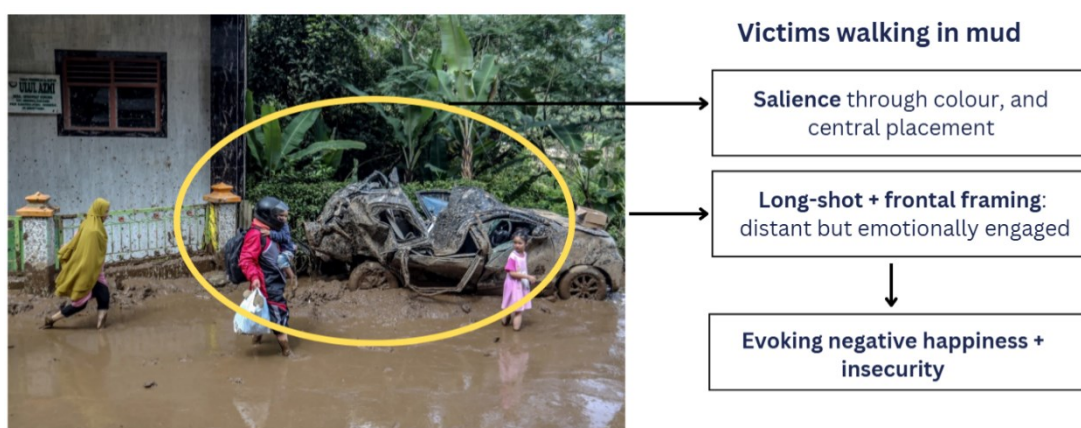
In news photos, the evaluative stance is conveyed through visual cues that evoke common ideas about disasters. At this point, volcanoes are widely recognised as powerful and dangerous natural forces. The depiction of a volcano erupting strongly evokes emotional responses. The dramatic eruption, the way the volcano dominates the image, and its symbolic meaning work together to convey emotional messages. Therefore, the evaluative meanings will depend on how viewers interpret and feel about the scene rather than on any explicit written explanation.

Rescue workers and volunteers use rubber rafts and life vests on March 4, 2025, to evacuate people safely across a flooded area in Rawajati village, Pancoran, South Jakarta. (Antara Foto/Bayu Pratama S)

Figure 3. Positive judgment under the subcategory of tenacity

Figure 3 depicts people who are actively responding to a flood crisis and emphasises courage and determination in hard times. In the image, people are rescued using inflatable boats. Some rescuers are seen paddling while others help keep the passengers safe and steady. The photo communicates a positive judgement, particularly the subcategory of tenacity. The people are not shown as helpless victims but as active individuals working together. Their actions in difficult conditions show moral responsibility and a strong commitment. The rescuer's forward movement through deep water and the teamwork on the risky bridge both demonstrate determination and courage. The evaluative meaning in these images comes from how they visually depict people's ongoing efforts in difficult situations.

The way the camera frames the scenes is very important for viewers to understand the image. The photo employs a medium shot, which allows viewers to see the physical effort and emotions of the people involved. This choice makes it easier for viewers to notice facial expressions, body movements, and interactions, and creates a feeling of connection. Furthermore, the eye-level angle places the viewer on the same level as the people in the photos, helping viewers relate and feel involved. Salient elements, such as rescuers in action and a victim being helped with care, are placed in the centre and highlighted with natural light. These choices draw immediate attention to the human acts, making them the main visual and emotional focus. The use of framing, lighting, and salience guides viewers to feel admiration and respect, and support a positive view of the people shown. Through this visual composition, the image subtly evaluates the character and values of the participants.

A family wades through mud, past a crushed car following landslides at the Semangat Gunung village in Karo, North Sumatra on November 25, 2024. (AFP/Kiki Cahyadi)

Figure 4. Negative affect under the subcategory of happiness and insecurity

Figure 4 illustrates the emotional effect of disaster by focusing on loss and insecurity. The image features a woman, a man, and children , with a

broken vehicle and mud and debris in the background. This is framed against a backdrop of mud, debris, and a wrecked vehicle. These photos communicate negative affect, particularly unhappiness (sad) and insecurity (fear). Those evaluations are conveyed through people's actions and expressions. Human expression, such as slumped bodies and the visible effort of carrying the belongings, reveals their pain and vulnerability. These visual cues encourage viewers to feel empathy and concern. In this sense, the composition and bodily expressions provide the basis for an affective reading by the audience.

This image portrays government and ordinary people in difficult situations. The depicted activities, such as evacuation, recovery, and survival, reveal their emotional struggle. Wide and medium camera shots in this image help contextualise this suffering by showing both the people and the damaged environment. This image does not use verbal cues to describe the suffering. Instead, the emotional meanings are evoked visually through people's actions and the damaged environment. In this way, the evaluative stance comes from the image, which encourages viewers to see the scenes as strong expressions of loss and instability.

Multimodal Evaluative Stance in Indonesian Hard News Coverage

This section explains how texts and images work together to express attitudinal meanings in disaster reporting. The interaction is examined using the framework of text-image relations in news discourse (Caple, 2013). The findings show that verbal and visual elements support each other in conveying evaluation. This interplay can be seen when describing disaster impacts, the emotions of victims, and the judgments of actors involved in the crisis response. In other words, image-text relations help convey the news report's evaluative stance in an emotionally engaging way.

The pattern of verbal evaluations reveals that negative evaluations are dominant. Negative appreciation appears 87 times and describes material damage, such as collapsed buildings or flooded areas. Negative affect occurs in 43 instances and shows victims' emotions such as sadness and anxiety. In contrast, positive evaluations are fewer and expressed through positive judgment (48 out of 52 instances). These evaluations portray government officials, rescue workers, and volunteers as courageous, committed, and socially responsible. The images support these evaluations by reinforcing or expanding the evaluations constructed in the text through intersemiotic repetition and extension.

Figure 5 illustrates how images repeat or extend the evaluative meanings in hard news reporting. Drawing on Caple's concept of intersemiotic extension and repetition (Caple, 2013), the image in this figure works in conjunction with written texts to reinforce and extend a particular evaluative stance. As shown in Figure 5a, the news story begins with the

headline "Two die, hundreds injured in 5-magnitude West Java quake," which immediately evokes feelings of loss and concern. These feelings align with negative affect, particularly unhappiness. This emotional response is repeated in the sub-headline, which provides detail by identifying the victims and deepens the emotional impact of the event.

The photo accompanying the article extends the negative evaluation in the text by depicting scenes of destruction, such as collapsed buildings. The image conveys negative sentiment and depicts the damage described in the report. An aerial image of damaged neighbourhoods shows the large scale of the disaster and makes it appear more serious. The focus on human suffering (-hap) and destruction (-val) continues in the lead paragraph, where emotional responses are further elaborated and are reinforced throughout the article through repeated references to loss and hardship.
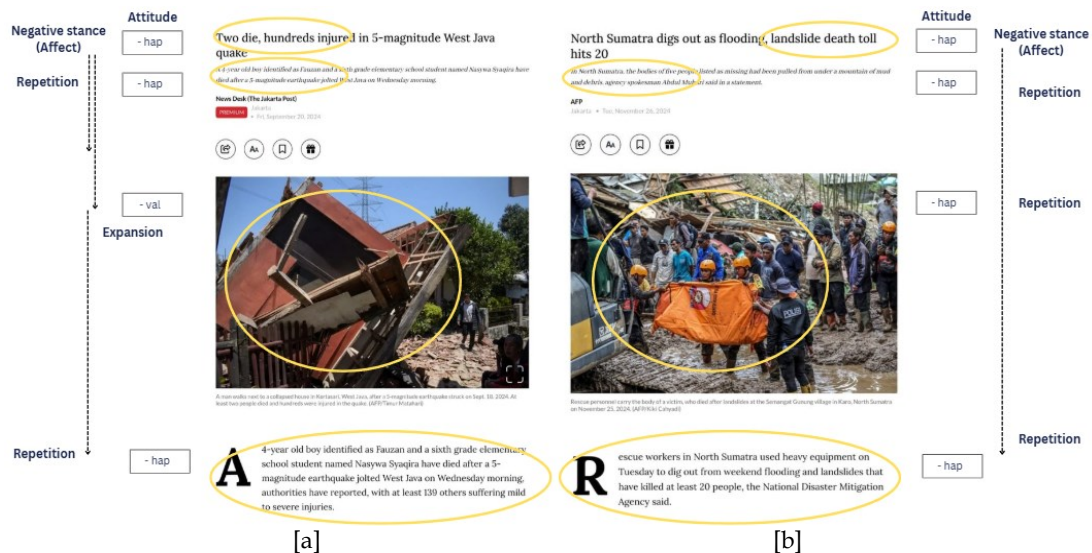

Figure 5. Intersemiotic relationship between texts and images in hard news

Similarly, Figure 5b illustrates intersemiotic repetition, in which visual and verbal elements work together to reinforce specific evaluative meanings. The news story begins with the headline "North Sumatra digs out as flooding, landslide death toll hits 20," which immediately evokes mixed feelings. It expresses admiration for the response to the disaster and, at the same time, concern about the loss. This headline combines both positive judgments: tenacity and negative affect: unhappiness. These evaluative stances are visually reinforced by images of rescue and social solidarity. For example, the photo shows rescuers carrying victims, volunteers distributing essential supplies, and emergency personnel working in dangerous conditions. The image represents perseverance and moral commitment. It uses eye-level angles and frontal shots, which emphasise the social value and moral strength

of the individuals shown. This evaluative pattern continues in the lead paragraph, where emotional responses are further developed. The same stance is repeated throughout the body or satellite sections of the article via references to rescue efforts, personal loss, and acts of service.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that negative appreciation and negative affect are the most common attitudinal resources in Indonesian hard-news reports on natural disasters. This pattern suggests that disaster news in Indonesia foregrounds physical damage and the emotional impact on affected communities. This emphasis aligns with the global news value of negativity in which events involving loss, disruption, and danger receive greater media attention (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, 2017; Zhang & Caple, 2021).

These results are in line with earlier studies in the Indonesian context. Puspita and Pranoto (2021) found that hard news disaster reports rely on appreciation to describe structural damage and environmental disruption. They also showed that judgment resources appear less frequently and are mainly used to evaluate institutional responses. Similarly, Namira et al. (2024) reported that Indonesian newspapers predominantly used negative appreciation to highlight the scale of destruction and ecological loss. These patterns suggest that Indonesian media frame disasters as urgent events that need immediate attention and coordinated action.

Compared with international contexts, Indonesian disaster reporting shows a similar pattern. Studies from other countries also demonstrate that disaster news often uses negative portrayals to describe destruction (e.g., Bailon et al., 2025; Houston et al., 2012; Liu & Stevenson, 2013; Vallente, 2016). Bailon et al. (2025) found that disaster news highlights physical destruction to emphasise the severity of events. Likewise, Liu and Stevenson (2013) found that both Chinese and Australian newspapers rely on negative appreciation to report damage, disruption, and material loss, although they differed in how affect was used. Vallente (2016) also noted that international disaster coverage frequently foregrounds risk, damage, and threat to create a sense of urgency. These findings suggest that the dominance of negative portrayal in Indonesian disaster news reflects a broader global journalistic practice in which damage and consequences are treated as key indicators of newsworthiness.

The study suggests that image selection and presentation can evoke evaluation in hard news reporting. This finding supports earlier research on disaster communication, which proves that framing choices can trigger emotional responses (Borah, 2009; Glück, 2018). The results also show that images and words in Indonesian disaster news work together to build a shared evaluative stance. Images support the attitudes expressed in the text,

especially the frequent use of negative appreciation and positive judgment. This multimodal alignment shows that disaster news relies on both language and visuals to emphasise the seriousness of events and highlight institutional responses. Similar patterns appear in other multimodal news studies, where the close connections between text and images strengthen evaluations and guide audience interpretation (see Economou, 2008, 2012; Fawzy, 2019).

The interaction between verbal and visual modes in the data points to clear intersemiotic relations that shape evaluative stance in disaster reporting. The findings indicate that images repeat and extend the evaluative meanings expressed in the headline. This pattern supports existing multimodal literature showing that news photographs can strengthen or intensify verbal meanings to guide audience interpretation (Caple, 2013, 2022; Liu, 2023). Research in crisis communication also shows that close alignment between visuals and text is central to meaning-making, especially in highlighting urgency and human impact (Geise & Xu, 2025; Xu & Löffelholz, 2024).

The present findings therefore suggest that intersemiosis in Indonesian disaster news primarily operates through reinforcement. Verbal descriptions set the evaluative frame, while images strengthen or clarify it. This coordination supports broader claims that multimodal news discourse relies on aligned semiotic modes to stabilise interpretation and direct public attention (Cheema et al., 2023). In this way, the study extends visual appraisal research by showing that these patterns also operate in hard-news reporting.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that evaluation is constructed through language and images in disaster reports from *The Jakarta Post*. The news texts mainly use negative appreciation (48% or 89 instances) and affect values (24% or 44 instances) to stress the seriousness of events, while positive judgment values (28% or 52 instances) highlight the actions of rescuers and officials. News photos support these meanings by showing both damage and institutional response. Through this close alignment, words and images create a clear evaluative stance that increases emotional impact, emphasises urgency, and builds public trust, showing that disaster news is not only descriptive but also emotionally and ideologically charged.

The findings have broader implications for media ethics and multimodal literacy. Disaster news shapes how audiences understand risk, responsibility, and urgency through language and images, not only through facts. Strong evaluative words and visuals can influence emotions and public judgment, so ethical reporting requires awareness of how evaluation is constructed. Readers also need multimodal literacy to recognise that evaluation in disaster news is intentional and built across modes.

Several practical points follow from these findings. Journalists should balance negative evaluation with constructive framing to avoid fear or desensitisation. Visual choices, such as shot, distance and salience, should be used carefully because they shape how severity and agency are perceived. Highlighting community recovery and using verified information can support ethical reporting and reduce sensationalism. Finally, this study contributes to multimodal discourse analysis by showing how Appraisal Theory can be applied to analyse evaluation across modes, particularly in hard news reporting.

This study has several limitations. The data come from one English-language newspaper and include a small number of articles, so the findings cannot be generalized. The study also relies on single-coder analysis and does not include journalists' perspectives, which may limit the strength of the interpretations. Future research can address these limits in several ways. Studies may compare national and international media to examine cultural differences in multimodal disaster framing. Longitudinal research could track changes in evaluation from the initial event to the recovery stage. Future work may also use corpus-assisted multimodal methods or automated image analysis to improve reliability and analytical scope.

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